

To: Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors

For Immediate Release:

September 6, 2008

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Number of pages: 2

‘Tis the season of hurricanes and tropical storms’ DDA urges the public to use good food safety practices during an emergency

The Caribbean and the Gulf coast of the U. S. just experienced the wrath of Hurricane Gustav that resulted in loss of life and tremendous economic and environmental destruction. For many, the power is still not on, which means that food safety and water contamination are huge issues even after the storm has left the area. There is a distinct possibility that one or more hurricane/tropical storms may impact the east coast of the U. S. – which means Delaware and Delmarva. Dr. Caroline Hughes, administrator of Food Products Inspection programs at the Delaware Department of Agriculture, asks, “How many of us know how to protect our food supply, and more importantly our families, by using good food safety practices in the event of a power outage?” Hughes continued, “We, as consumers, must take an active role in our own food safety.”

If the temperature in your refrigerator rises to above 40 °F for more than two hours, do you know which food will stay safe and which food you should discard? If the food in your freezer has thawed and has been held above 40 °F for more than 2 hours, do you know which food has to be discarded and which can be refrozen? The United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety Inspection Service (USDA FSIS) provides excellent information to help consumers with these and many other food safety questions at the following website:

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Keeping_Food_Safe_During_an_Emergency/index.asp. A few examples, among many, follow:

REFRIGERATOR FOODS – When to Save and When to Throw It Out

Food	Held above 40 °F for over 2 hours
Raw or leftover cooked meat, poultry, fish, or seafood; soy meat substitutes	Discard
Pizza – with any topping	Discard
Soft Cheeses: blue/bleu, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, Neufchatel, queso blanco, queso fresco	Discard
Hard Cheeses: Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, provolone, Romano	Safe
Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt, eggnog, soy milk	Discard
Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products	Discard
Canned fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates	Safe

FROZEN FOOD – When to Save and When to Throw It Out

Food	Still contains ice crystals and feels as cold as if refrigerated	Thawed. Held above 40 °F for over 2 hours
Beef, veal, lamb, pork, and ground meat	Refreeze	Discard
Poultry and ground poultry	Refreeze	Discard
Variety meats (liver, kidney, heart, chitterlings)	Refreeze	Discard
Milk	Refreeze. May lose some texture.	Discard
Casseroles – pasta, rice based	Refreeze	Discard
Breakfast items – waffles, pancakes, bagels	Refreeze	Refreeze
Frozen meal, entrée, specialty items (pizza, sausage and biscuit, meat pie, convenience foods)	Refreeze	Discard

-MORE-

More tips from the http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Keeping_Food_Safe_During_an_Emergency/index.asp:

ABCD's of Keeping Food Safe in an Emergency

Always keep meat, poultry, fish, and eggs refrigerated at or below 40 °F and frozen food at or below 0 °F. This may be difficult when the power is out.

Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed. Obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic foot full freezer for 2 days. Plan ahead and know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased.

Be prepared for an emergency...

...by having items on hand that don't require refrigeration and can be eaten cold or heated on the outdoor grill. Shelf-stable food, boxed or canned milk, water, and canned goods should be part of a planned emergency food supply. Make sure you have ready-to-use baby formula for infants ... Remember to use these items and replace them from time to time. Be sure to keep a hand-held can opener for an emergency.

Consider what you can do ahead of time to store your food safely in an emergency. If you live in a location that could be affected by a flood, plan your food storage on shelves that will be safely out of the way of contaminated water. Coolers are a great help for keeping food cold if the power will be out for more than 4 hours-have a couple on hand along with frozen gel packs. When your freezer is not full, keep items close together-this helps the food stay cold longer.

Digital, dial, or instant-read food thermometers and appliance thermometers will help you know if the food is at safe temperatures. Keep appliance thermometers in the refrigerator and freezer at all times. When the power is out, an appliance thermometer will always indicate the temperature in the refrigerator and freezer no matter how long the power has been out. The refrigerator temperature should be 40 °F or below; the freezer, 0 °F or lower. If you're not sure a particular food is cold enough, take its temperature with a food thermometer.

For answers to frequently asked questions and more information on meat, poultry seafood, cheese, dairy, eggs, fruits, vegetables, sauces, spreads, jams, bread and bread products, pasta, desserts, and other foods, DDA urges consumers to:

- Check the aforementioned USDA FSIS website
- Check the DDA website, www.dda.delaware.gov , and look under **Hot Topics**
- Call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline – 1-888-674-6854
- Ask Karen! www.fsis.usda.gov

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